

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2423  
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

UNCLAS HELSINKI 0583

EO 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, ECON, FI  
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS UNDER WAY

REF: HELSINKI 0535

1. PRIME MINISTER KALEVI SORSABEGAN GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS  
FEBRUARY 21 WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE PARTIES COMPRISING THE  
CURRENT GOVERNMENT. THE FIVE PARTIES ARE SORSA'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
PARTY, CENTER PARTY, FINNISH PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE, (COMMUNIST  
FRONT), SWEDISH PEOPLE'S PARTY AND LIBERAL PEOPLE'S PARTY. THE GOAL  
IS THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT TO TAKE OFFICE ON OR SHORTLY  
FOLLOWING MARCH 1, THE DAY THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN BEGINS HIS NEW  
TERM. UNTIL THEN, THE PRESENT SORSA GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE ON  
A CARETAKER BASIS.

2. SORSA'S PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS REVEALED A WILLINGNESS AMONG  
THE FIVE PARTIES COMPRISING THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE  
THE SAME COALITION IN A NEW GOVERNMENT. OVER THE PAST THREE DAYS  
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REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE PARTIES HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO DRAFT  
A GOVERNMENT PROGRAM WHICH IS PLANNED TO BE READY BY THE BEGINNING OF  
NEXT WEEK. A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PARTIES REMAIN TO BE  
RESOLVED, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO DEALING WITH AND  
ANTICIPATED FIVE BILLION MARK (APPROXIMATELY US\$1.2 BILLION)  
DEFICIT IN THE 1978 GOVERNMENT BUDGET. THE QUESTION OF ALLOTMENT  
OF CABINET MINISTRIES AMONG THE FIVE PARTIES ALSO REMAINS TO

BE RESOLVED.

3. GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS HAVE BEEN ACCCOMPANIED BY SPECULATION CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THE NEXT ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN MARCH, 1979, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS THE AUTHORITY TO ADVANCE THE ELECTIONS IF IN HIS JUDGMENT IT IS ADVISABLE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT FAILURE OF THE CURRENT FIVE-PARTY TALKS COULD LEAD THE PRESIDENT TO ANNOUNCE EARLY ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY SAID THAT HE DOES NOT FAVOR ADVANCING THE ELECTIONS, AND THE FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS HAVE ALSO INDICATED PUBLICLY THEIR LACK OF INTEREST IN EARLY ELECTIONS. WHILE EARLY ELECTIONS CANNOT BE RULED OUT, AT THIS STAGE IT APPEARS MORE LIKELY THAT THE PARTIES WILL FIND A WAY TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES AND THAT THE FIVE-PARTY COALITION WILL BE RECONSTITUTED IN A NEW GOVERNMENT NEXT WEEK.  
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